FAQ 10: HOW DO YOU EXPLAIN THESE TRADITIONAL CATHOLIC BELIEFS?

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666: THE NUMBER OF THE BEAST

All kinds of nonsense has been written about the meaning of "666" in Apocalypse 13:18/DRV: "Here is wisdom. He that hath understanding, let him count the number of the beast. For it is the number of a man: and the number of him is six hundred sixty-six." Some even say that it portends the end of the world; others, that it stands for the pope. Both are incorrect; "666" refers to the past, not the future.

First of all, one cannot put too much stock in the exact number "666," as it is not certain that this is even the number involved. Before the invention of the printing press, when copies of the Bible had to be made by hand, it was common for copying errors to creep in over time: words and lines transposed or repeated or omitted or mistranscribed. Numerals were particularly likely to be mistranscribed, as the Greeks used letters of the alphabet for numerals (alpha = 1, beta = 2, etc.), followed by a stroke. With such symbols being used outside the context of a word or sentence, it was easy for errors of transcription to arise.

Quite a few numbers in the Bible, such as the number of people that Christ fed with loaves and fishes on the mount and the number of times one should forgive, are variously recorded in the manuscripts. This is also the case with the number "666" in verse 18. The reading "hexakosioi hexekonta hex" ("666") is supported by the earliest papyrological source (Papyrus 47) of the Apocalypse, as well as the major Codex Sinaiticus (Aleph). However, the uncial manuscript traditions A and C are considered superior to P47 and Aleph for the Apocalypse, and although the A tradition reads "hexakonta,"
the
C tradition reads mostly deka, so that
the number would be "616."

When Greek letters are thus used as
numerals, the difference
between
666 and 616 is merely a change from xi to iota
(666 = chi xi sigma; 616 =
chi
iota sigma). St. Irenaeus (ca. 130-202), one
of the Apostolic Fathers (a
term used to describe the immediate disciples
of the Apostles), was aware
of
the two readings, but added that those who had
themselves seen St. John,
the
author of the Apocalypse, face to face,
attested to "666."

By a process called "gematria" (coming
from the Greek word for
"geometry"), words and sentences are read as
numbers by the assigning of
numerical instead of phonetic values to each
letter of the alphabet. As
it
turns out, the number "666" has specific
reference to Caesar Nero in
Hebrew.
Surprisingly, the variant reading, 616, has
specific reference to Caesar
Nero
in Latin and Greek. Thus, we have all three
sacred languages concurring in
the interpretation of the "mark of the beast"
as Caesar Nero.

It should also be pointed out that the
translation "beast" is not
strictly accurate in modern English. The
Greek word, therion, refers
simply
to a wild animal, even an insect, whereas in
modern English the word
"beast"
carries a pejorative, even monstrous,
connotation.

So what is the upshot of all this? It
seems clear that the
reference
to the "number of the beast" is the "number of
a man," Caesar Nero, the
pagan
Roman emperor, who reigned from A.D. 54 to 68.
Nero serves here as the
representative of the pagan Roman empire as
opposed to Christian Rome.

Nero was the first Roman emperor to
persecute the Christians, as
the
Roman historian reports in his Annales
(XV.44): "ergo abolendo rumori
Nero
subdidit reos et quaesitissimis poenis
adfecit, quos per flagitia invisos
vulgus Christianos appellabat" [therefore, to
put an end to the rumor
(that

he himself had caused the Great Fire at Rome in A.D. 64), Nero falsely accused as the guilty parties and subjected to the most unusual punishments those hated for their crimes, whom the common people called "Christians"].

The "666" reference, therefore, has nothing to do with the pope. It has nothing to do with the future. Having the "mark of the beast" meant doing obeisance to the pagan emperors of Rome, after the manner of the Jews, whom St. John the Evangelist quotes as proclaiming before the Roman governor Pontius Pilate (John 19:15/DRV): "We have no king but Caesar."

So there is no need to worry about "666." Nero and his pagan empire has already lived and died.

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ABORTION

In the sin of abortion, as in many other sins, there is more than one species of malice. There is an abuse of the sex faculties, as well as the direct destruction of the fetal life. But since the latter crime is the much more heinous, abortion is commonly considered by theologians as primarily a sin of murder. The Church follows the same view by classifying abortion as a delict contra vitam (against life) [Canon 2350.1].

Even though there is a probable opinion [on the part of some Catholic theologians, including St. Thomas Aquinas] that the rational soul is infused only several weeks after conception, the abortion of a living foetus, however immature, involves the guilt of murder; because this is one of the cases in which probabilism may not be followed [so N. Noldin, A. Schmitt, and G. Heinzel].

If it were ever conclusively proved that in the early states of fetal life the rational soul is not yet present, abortion would still be a grave
sin, but in that case the predominant malice
would be the frustration of
the
process of procreation, analogous to the
malice of contraception. (Fr.
Francis J. O'Connell)

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ANIMALS AND HEAVEN

The constant teaching of the Church is
that animals do have a
soul, that is, an "anima," or animating force.
However, in the case of
animals, this is not a "rational" soul,
capable of making moral choices;
they operate by some form of instinct.
Therefore, animals cannot merit
Heaven, as can man, with his rational soul.

Don't fall into the Millennialist
heresy by romanticizing Heaven
into some kind of "perfect earth." Heaven is
the Beatific Vision, the
immediate and direct perception of Almighty
God. When you are in the
presence of the Most Perfect and Most
Beautiful God, everything else
pales into oblivion.

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ANNULMENTS

Marriage annulments from the Newchurch of the New Order are problematical because the grounds in the New Order are significantly different from the traditional doctrine of Roman Catholicism. Moreover, New Order annulments have been used to produce a scandalous "divorce mill" in the Newchurch sect. Traditionally, there are few cases that truly warrant an annulment, after a detailed investigation of the facts and arguments on both sides.

Even many Traditional Catholics do not understand what an annulment, or (more accurately) declaration of nullity, is. It has nothing to do with what happened after the marriage was entered into. It relates only to an invalidating defect at the time of the marriage that rendered the contact null and void. After all, the marriage contract (exchange of promises) was publicly entered into by the parties implicitly "for better or for worse, for richer or for poorer, in sickness and in health, until death do us part."

Remember the standard warning before the marriage contract is entered into: "If anyone knows why these two should not be joined in

Holy Matrimony, let him speak now or forever hold his peace"? The banns, or announcement from the pulpit, of impending marriages, is intended to ferret out any nullifying causes before the marriage is entered into, for example, one of the parties is already married, one of the parties is under the age of consent, or the parties are related to one another in too close a degree by consanguinity (blood relative) or affinity (ties other than those of blood).

In 1930 in the United States, for example, there were 9 declarations of nullity issued by the ecclesiastical court. By 1991, that number had risen to 63,933 -- a whopping increase of over 7000 per cent! With Newchurch now grossing up to 1,000 USD in fees for each case in its fake divorce mill, that could equal a cool 64,000,000 USD for Newchurch's scam operation in the United States alone.

Clearly, this is a divorce mill being run by the apostate Newchurch of the New Order. That is an 82% dissolution rate for a Church that is supposed to respect marriage! 82 per cent of the filings for "Newchurch divorce" Clearly, this is a divorce mill being run by the apostate anti-Catholic Newchurch of the New Order, and Newchurch has no respect for marriage. In fact, in his 2015 Encyclical Letter "Amoris Laetitiae" [The Joy of Sex], Francis-Bergoglio moved toward admitting bigamist Newchurchers to gobble the Novus Ordo cookie.

For practical purposes, Newchurch annulments should be presumed invalid and Traditional Catholics should put the facts before their personal confessor or priest where they are attending the Traditional Latin Mass and follow his judgment. Protestant-Masonic-Pagan Newchurch, which is certainly not Catholic, should not be approached for any reason, as it is apostate from the Catholic Faith.

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APPARITIONS, MIRACLES, PRIVATE REVELATIONS, AND VISIONS

The question often arises how much emphasis we should put upon private revelations, apparitions, and visions. There have been some 260 alleged, likely spurious, "apparitions" since Vatican II (Medjugorje, Bayside, etc.). Too many Catholics, so confused in the present state of the Church, cling "to any port in a storm" and therefore cling to even the
ludicrous, such as the "apparition" of the
Blessed Virgin Mary in an oil
stain in a subway in Mexico or in the knothole
of a tree in Northern
California!

First, it should be stated that such
latter-day apparitions, even
if
true, are never part of the Public Revelation
of the Church, and nothing
in
them is necessary for our salvation, nor are
we bound by them as we are
by
the Public Revelation of the Church. In fact,
they are much more apt to
be
diabolical than worthy of belief. Everything
necessary for our salvation
is
contained in the Public Revelation of the
Church, that is, the Deposit of
Faith: Sacred Scripture (the Bible) and
Sacred Tradition, which closed
with
the death of the last of the Apostles, St.
John.

"Private" Revelation in Catholic
theology has nothing to do with
how many people purportedly saw something.
The term "Private Revelation"
comprises anything occurring after the
Apostolic Age, anything that is
not

recorded in Sacred Scripture or Sacred Apostolic Tradition as one of the miracles of Our Lord Jesus Christ or His Apostles. Only Sacred Scripture and Sacred Tradition comprise "Public Revelation." It has been the constant teaching of the Church that no Catholic is required to place credence in any revelation except what is in Sacred Scripture and Sacred Apostolic Tradition.

As far back as Deuteronomy, the Jews were warned against visions: "Thou shalt not hear the words of that prophet or dreamer. For the Lord your God trieth you, that it may appear whether you love him with all your heart, and with all your soul, or not.... And that prophet or forger of dreams shall be slain: because he spoke to draw you away from the Lord your God" (Deuteronomy 13:3,5/DRV).

The Gospels warn us: "An evil and adulterous generation seeketh a sign; and a sign shall not be given it, but the sign of Jonas the prophet. For, as Jonas was in the whale's belly three days and three nights; so shall the Son of man be in the heart of the earth three days and three nights." (Matthew 12:29/DRV) In other words, we look to Our Lord Himself as the sign.

Moreover, Our Lord Himself warned us that false "miracles" can be used by Satan to deceive: "For there shall arise false Christs and false prophets and shall shew great signs and wonders, insomuch as to deceive (if possible) even the elect (Matthew 24:24/DRV). When His Apostles asked for a prediction of the future, Our Lord told them explicitly: "It is not for you to know the times or moments, which the Father hath put in his own power (Acts 1:8/DRV).

In place of Catholic and Apostolic teaching and practice, to presume to find a new basis of faith in private revelations prophecies, visions, and "signs and wonders," particularly in Fatima, the error of "apparitionism," is a grave error. We must be very cautious indeed about these things, since Sacred Scripture warns us again and again about the fact that even visions,
apparitions, signs, and wonders may be of the
Devil:

"Beloved, do not trust every spirit but test
the spirits to see whether
they
belong to God, because many false prophets
have gone out into the world"
(1
John 4:1/DRV)

And again:

"For such false apostles are deceitful
workmen, transforming themselves
into
the apostles of Christ. And no wonder: for
Satan himself transformeth
himself into an angel of light. Therefore, it
is no great thing if his
ministers be transformed as the ministers of
justice, whose end shall be
according to their works" (2 Corinthians
11:13-15/DRV)

And again:

"And then that wicked one shall be revealed:
whom the Lord Jesus shall
kill
with the spirit of his mouth and shall destroy
with the brightness of his
coming: him Whose coming is according to the
working of Satan, in all
power
and signs and lying wonders: And in all seduction of iniquity to them
that
perish: because they receive not the love of
the truth, that they might
be
saved. Therefore God shall send them the
operation of error, to believe
lying" (2 Thessalonians 2:8-11/DRV).

St. John of the Cross (1542-1591),
perhaps the Church's greatest
mystic, warned: "The desire for private
revelations deprives faith of
its
purity, develops a dangerous curiosity that
becomes a source of
illusions,
fills the mind with vain fancies, and often
proves the want of humility,
and
of submission to Our Lord, Who, through His
public revelation, has given
all
that is needed for salvation. We must suspect
those apparitions that
lack
dignity or proper reserve, and above all,
those that are ridiculous.
This
last characteristic is a mark of human or
diabolical machination. STAY
AWAY
FROM VISIONS, APPARITIONS, AND MIRACLES AS
MUCH AS YOU CAN. BE CAREFUL
OF
VISIONS, EVEN WHEN THEY ARE AUTHENTIC.

St. Vincent Ferrer similarly warned: "The first remedy against spiritual temptations which the devil plants in the hearts of many persons in these unhappy times, is to have no desire to procure by prayer, meditation, or any other good work, what are called (private) revelations, or spiritual experiences, beyond what happens in the ordinary course of things; such a desire of things which surpass the common order can have no other root or foundation but pride, presumption, a vain curiosity in what regards the things of God, and in short, an exceedingly weak faith. It is to punish this evil desire that God abandons the soul, and permits it to fall into the illusions and temptations of the devil, who seduces it, and represents to it false visions and delusive revelations. Here we have the source of most of the spiritual temptations that prevail at the present time; temptations which the spirit of evil roots in the souls of those who may be called the precursors of Antichrist."

Pope St. Pius X captured the truly Catholic sense when he wrote in 1913: "When anyone tells me about the extraordinary, I am the most incredulous man in the world..., but when holiness results from the practice of virtue..., I believe in it. Just this morning ... I was saying that long ago the devil manifested himself openly in the possessed whom he caused to suffer, and from whom he could be driven out only by exorcism. Now he has changed his method; he takes the appearance of sanctity and makes people believe in visions. He even gives to certain persons the knowledge of hidden things, so that they may appear to prophesy; sometimes he even simulates stigmata! But as for holiness expressed in the simple practice of virtue..., I believe in that. That is indeed holiness.... The way to sanctity is not difficult. It is a thorny road, but easy."

TO SUM UP, IN THE WORDS OF POPE BENEDICT XIV: "WE CANNOT AND WE OUGHT NOT TO GIVE THEM [PRIVATE REVELATIONS] THE ASSENT OF DIVINE FAITH, BUT ONLY THAT OF HUMAN FAITH, ACCORDING TO THE DICTATES OF PRUDENCE WHENEVER THESE DICTATES ENABLE US TO DECIDE THAT THEY ARE PROBABLE AND WORTHY OF PIOUS CREDENCE." IT MUST ALSO BE REMEMBERED

THAT MIRACLES UPSET THE
NATURAL
BALANCE OF GOD'S UNIVERSAL LAWS, SO
"MIRACULOUS" EXPLANATIONS ARE
NATURALLY
TO BE RESORTED TO WITH GREAT RARITY.

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BAPTISM OF DESIRE AND "OUTSIDE THE CHURCH NO SALVATION"

FR. FRANCIS J. CONNELL, "FR. CONNELL ANSWERS MORAL QUESTIONS," (1958),
comments as follows:

The doctrinal phrase "Extra Ecclesiam Nulla Salus," first used by
St. Cyprian (ca. 210-258) and approved by the Council of Florence (1438-
1445), and its associated doctrine, baptism of desire (flaminis, or de
voto), is a complex subject that some misconstrue by taking the flat
statement out of its proper context within the balance of traditional
Catholic teaching since the early centuries of the Church.

The doctrinal phrase was not originally directed against non-
Catholics AS INDIVIDUALS, but against heretical sects insofar as they are
sects. Its purpose is to safeguard the truth that there is only ONE body of
Christ and, therefore, only ONE Church that
which possesses and
communicates
the fullness of the blessings brought to men
by Christ. (Fr. John Laux,
Catholic Apologetics, Book IV, p. 125)

It is easy to err on either side of
the question: to believe
that no one who is not a formal, practicing
Catholic can be saved; or to
believe that all men are saved, no matter what
their belief and practice
may
be.

It is impossible to be saved outside
the Church, because the
Church
is the rule or measure of faith, without which
faith it is impossible to
attain heaven. Natural goodwill is not enough
to be saved. Anyone who
dies with natural good will alone cannot be
saved.

However, if God gives the grace to
embrace the True Faith, and
one
accepts -- that is, baptism of desire -- he is
truly a member of the
Church
by means of his desire of being united to the
Church by sacramental
Baptism,
were it in his power. He can thereby be saved inside the Church, even
though he cannot receive Sacramental Baptism
of water.

In Catholic moral theology, Baptism is
necessary for salvation by
necessity of means. When a thing is necessary
for the attainment of an
end
because it contains in itself something
requisite for this purpose, we
say
that it is necessary by necessity of means.
In such an event, if a
person
does not employ the means, even though it
involves no fault on his part,
"per se" he cannot attain the end.

When we say that "per se" it is
impossible to attain an end
without
something that is necessary by necessity of
means, we imply that by God's
ordinance another means may supply in certain
cases. Thus, Baptism of
desire and Baptism of blood can supply the
chief effects of the Baptism
of
water IN CERTAIN CASES. In such an event, we
say that the means in
question
is necessary by relative necessity of means,
as distinct from the case
when
nothing will supply for the means, i.e.,
absolute necessity of means. A person is not necessarily "outside" the Catholic Church merely because he is not an actual member. But, in order to be saved, one must be united to the Catholic Church at least by desire, either explicit or implicit. Through such a desire one whose lack of actual membership in the Church is not due to any fault on his own part can be "inside" the Church, and, if he joins to his desire an act of faith and an act of divine charity, he can be saved."

THE TRADITIONAL CATHOLIC ENCYCLOPEDIA (1917) summarizes as follows:

> The Baptism of desire (baptismus flaminis) is a perfect contrition of heart, and every act of perfect charity or pure love of God which contains, at least implicitly, a desire (votum) of Baptism. The Latin word flamen is used because Flamen is a name for the Holy Ghost, Whose special office it is to move the heart to love God and to conceive penitence for sin. The "Baptism of the Holy Ghost" is a term employed in the third century by the anonymous author of the book

"De Rebaptismate." The efficacy of this Baptism of desire to supply the place of the Baptism of water, as to its principal effect, is proved from the words of Christ. After He had declared the necessity of Baptism (John 3), He promised justifying grace for acts of charity or perfect contrition (John 14): "He that loveth Me, shall be loved of my Father: and I will love him and will manifest myself to him."
And again: "If any one love me, he will keep my word, and my Father will love him, and we will come to him, and will make our abode with him."

Since these texts declare that justifying grace is bestowed on account of acts of perfect charity or contrition, it is evident that these acts supply the place of Baptism as to its principal effect, the remission of sins. This doctrine is set forth clearly by the Council of Trent. In the Fourth Chapter of the Fourteenth Session, the Council teaches that contrition is sometimes perfected by charity, and reconciles man to God, before the Sacrament of Penance is received. In the Fourth Chapter of the
Sixth Session, in speaking of the necessity of
Baptism, it says that men
can
not obtain original justice "except by the
washing of regeneration or its
desire" (voto). The same doctrine is taught
by Pope Innocent III (cap.
Debitum, iv, De Baptismate), and the contrary
propositions are condemned
by
Popes Pius V and Gregory XII, in proscribing
the 31st and 33rd
propositions
of Baius."

ST. ALPHONSUS LIGUORI (1696-1787) comments as
follows:

> It is de fide [of the faith and
required to be believed by all
Catholics] that there are some men saved also
by the Baptism of the
Spirit
[i.e., de voto, by desire, by the grace of the
Holy Ghost]. In this he
expresses the teaching of all the Fathers,
doctors, popes, and
theologians,
including St. Cyprian, St. Ambrose, St.
Augustine, St. Fulgentius, St.
Thomas Aquinas (Summa Theologiae, IIIa, Q. 68,
A.2), St. Peter Canisius,
St.
Alphonsus de Liguori, Pope Innocent II, Pope
Innocent III, and Pope St.

Pius
X (De Baptismo, cap. 1).

THE COUNCIL OF TRENT (1545-1563) defines as follows:

> Translatio ab eo statu, in quo homo nascitur filius primi Adae, in statum gratiae ... post evangelium promulgatum sine lavacro regenerationis AUT EIUS VOTO fieri not potest. [The translation from that state in which man is born a child of the first Adam, to the state of grace ... cannot, since the promulgation of the gospel, be effected except through the laver of regeneration OR ITS DESIRE.] (Sessio Sexta de Iustificatione, Caput IV: Insinuatur Descriptio Iustificationis Impii, et Modus Eius in Statu Gratiae)

> Si quis dixerit, sacramenta novae legis non esse ad salutem necessaria, sed superflua, et sine eis AUT EORUM VOTO per solam fidem homines a Deo gratiam iustificationis adispisci, licet omnia singulis necessaria non sint: anathema sit. [If anyone says that the sacraments of the New Law are not necessary for salvation, but are superfluous, and
that
without them OR WITHOUT THE DESIRE OF THEM,
men obtain from God through
faith alone the grace of justification, though
all are not necessary for
each one, let him be anathema.] (Session
Septima, Canones de Sacramentis
in
Genere, N. 4)

St. Alphonsus Liguori in Book 6 of his
Theologia Moralis, quotes
this
passage and comments: "Therefore, it is de
fide [dogmatic] that men are
also saved by Baptism of desire."

TRADITIONAL POPES OF THE 19TH AND EARLY 20TH
CENTURY comment as follows
concerning "invincible ignorance" of the true
Faith, that is, ignorance
outside the moral responsibility of the
individual.

Pope Pius IX
Singulari quadam
Allocution against the Errors of Rationalism
and Indifferentism
December 9, 1854

It must, of course, be held as a
matter of faith that outside the
apostolic Roman Church no one can be saved,
that the Church is the only
ark

of salvation, and that whoever does not enter it will perish in the
flood.
On the other hand, it must likewise be held as certain that those who are
affected by ignorance of the true religion, if it is invincible
ignorance,
are not subject to any guilt in this matter before the eyes of the Lord.
Now, then, who could presume in himself an ability to set the boundaries
of
such ignorance, taking into consideration the natural differences of
peoples, lands, native talents, and so many other factors? Only when we
have been released from the bonds of this body and see God just as He is
(1
John 3:2) shall we really understand how close and beautiful a bond joins
divine mercy with divine justice. But as long as we dwell on earth,
encumbered with this soul-dulling, mortal body, let us tenaciously cling
to
the Catholic doctrine that there is one God, one faith, one baptism (Eph.
4:5).

Pope Pius IX
Quanto conficiamur moerore
August 10, 1863

And here, beloved Sons and Venerable

Brethren, it is necessary once more to mention and censure the serious error into which some Catholics have unfortunately fallen. For they are of the opinion that men who live in errors, estranged from the true faith and from Catholic unity, can attain eternal life. This is in direct opposition to Catholic teaching.

We all know that those who are afflicted with invincible [not subjectively culpable] ignorance with regard to our holy religion, if they carefully keep the precepts of the natural law that have been written by God in the hearts of all men, if they are prepared to obey God, and if they lead a virtuous and dutiful life, can attain eternal life by the power of divine light and grace. For God, Who reads comprehensively in every detail the minds and souls, the thoughts and habits of all men, will not permit, in accordance with His infinite goodness and mercy, anyone who is not guilty of a voluntary fault to suffer eternal torments (suppliciis).

However, also well-known is the

Catholic dogma that no one can be saved outside the Catholic Church, and that those who obstinately oppose the authority and definitions of the church, and who stubbornly remain separated form the unity of the Church and from the successor of Peter, the Roman Pontiff (to whom the Savior has entrusted the care of His vineyard), cannot attain salvation.

Pope St. Pius X
Catechism of Christian Doctrine, para. 132

A person outside the Church by his own fault, and who dies without perfect contrition, will not be saved. But he who finds himself outside without fault of his own, and who lives a good life, can be saved by the love called charity, which unites unto God, and in a spiritual way also to the Church, that is, to the soul of the